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*2003*  
***Minister's Awards***  
*For Municipal Excellence*  
***Fall, 2003***

# *Message from the Minister*



In this, the second year of the Municipal Excellence Awards program, we were very pleased to receive 47 submissions from municipalities of every size and from every part of the province. Together with the ever-growing catalogue of municipal practices in the Municipal Excellence Network database, this increase from 2002

indicates to me that the Awards are having their intended effect.

In addition to recognizing and celebrating the great work of local governments in Alberta, these Awards are playing a role in stimulating excellence. Every time another municipality goes through the submission process, its people reflect on and analyze their practice, and then document it for the Network database on the MEnet Web site. There, it becomes part of the invaluable knowledge resource that Alberta municipalities are drawing on in their continuing quest for improvement and excellence. This kind of knowledge transfer will only make our municipalities stronger and ensure that Albertans receive better government and greater value on their tax dollars.

The recipients and honourable mentions for this year's Awards for Innovation, Outstanding Achievement and Partnership were chosen by a peer review committee. This group consisted of representatives from the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the Alberta Rural Municipal Administrators Association, the Local Government Administration Association, the Government Finance Officers Association, and Alberta Municipal Affairs. My thanks to these people for their time and diligence in support of this worthy endeavour.

Local governments are the backbone of this province. You provide the everyday

services Albertans rely on and so truly deserve to be recognized for the excellent work you do. I congratulate and thank the Award recipients, and all of you who submitted leading practices, for sharing your successes and ideas.

Guy Boutilier  
Minister  
Alberta Municipal Affairs

## *2003 Minister's Awards for Municipal Excellence*

# **INNOVATION AWARD**

## **The City of Lethbridge**

Frustrated by a lengthy annual process, Lethbridge city council saw the need for a new budgeting framework to support its ongoing strategic planning cycle. The city came up with a unique three-year approach that allows council to plan over a time period consistent with its elected term of office.

Strong leadership carried elected officials and administrators through several years' work to develop this process, which started with a two-year pilot and then added a third year. Extensive involvement from city staff, community residents and business leaders resulted in a strong emphasis on service delivery, program evaluation and accountability.

The new process has yielded great savings in time spent by both council and city managers on budget preparation and review. This in turn has increased capacity for other important work such as unit business plans and corporate strategic planning.

This groundbreaking project now links operating and capital expenditures and has improved predictability of budget resources for city departments and community groups. It also allows elected officials to communicate with the public from a more knowledgeable position.



## **OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

### **The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo**

Due to its vast area, remote location and giant industrial facilities, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo is at risk for major natural and man-made disasters. It needed an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) that could respond by drawing on regional capacity instead of importing help from central Alberta.

Consultation with regional industry, local businesses, volunteer agencies and other orders of government produced a collaborative effort second to none.

Formal mutual aid agreements with companies like Syncrude, Suncor and Albion Sands have reduced dangerous goods response times from 10 hours to 10 minutes. Communications protocols with the Province have enhanced evacuation processes for disasters such as last summer's House River fire. Cultural sensitivity training for responders has improved relations with the region's different ethnic groups.

The Wood Buffalo EOC represents the best in both process and product. Good consultation led to well-conceived plans; sound preparation and training led to healthy information sharing; and all of this has resulted in high-level operational effectiveness.

## **PARTNERSHIP AWARD**

### **The Municipal District of Foothills No. 31 and the Town of High River**

The M.D. of Foothills No. 31 and the Town of High River each needed additional office and meeting space, yet could not justify separate new buildings. Working from a strong mutual commitment to cooperation, the two municipalities hired consultants and ran a public input process that gained solid support from their citizens. They also approached other municipalities to learn from their experiences in this type of partnership.

Each jurisdiction donated land for both the building site and surrounding parking area and each contributed significant staff resources for design and construction supervision. The new building opened in High River last October, with the partners maintaining their own separate office areas but sharing the council chamber and public meeting spaces.

The building meets the needs of both partners at 65 per cent of the cost of separate facilities. It provides a healthier working environment for staff and a more accessible council chamber that encourages public attendance by citizens from their respective communities.

Now that the M.D. and the town are in their new offices, they are looking at ways to find more economies through shared services such as an integrated computer system. But probably the most important result of this project is the increased sense of trust and respect now shared by the two municipalities.

## ***Honourable Mention – Innovation***

### **The City of Fort Saskatchewan; Lamont, Sturgeon and Strathcona counties; and the towns of Bruderheim, Gibbons, Morinville and Redwater**

The Northeast Region Community Awareness Emergency Response Association involves the City of Fort Saskatchewan; Lamont, Sturgeon and Strathcona counties; and the towns of Bruderheim, Gibbons, Morinville and Redwater. These municipalities have now joined forces through this association to develop a new community notification system.

Establishing a public-private partnership, the association created a technologically-advanced call-out system that provides information to the public in potential emergencies. The call-in line allows members to post messages in a common voice mailbox that can be accessed by the public via a toll-free phone number. This system supports an open, ongoing dialogue with the public, making member communities safer and better informed.



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## ***Honourable Mention – Outstanding Achievement***

### **Strathcona County**

Strathcona County conducted a rigorous study on the long-term viability of agriculture within its boundaries, a bold step in addressing a challenge that many Alberta municipalities will face over the next decade. The study examined the land use in the urban and rural sectors of the community and placed a significant value on a balanced relationship between the two. Given the continuing urban development in the county, the study has created an important outcome – heightened community awareness regarding the role of agriculture and its benefits to the county.

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## ***Honourable Mention – Partnership***

### **The Town of Coaldale, the City of Lethbridge and the County of Lethbridge**

The Town of Coaldale, the City of Lethbridge and the County of Lethbridge partnered to develop a regional treated water supply. Existing treatment systems in the town and county were taxed to their limits and the city needed an upgrade to its systems. Elected officials and administrators from all three jurisdictions combined through various committees to run a public consultation process and secure the necessary approvals. The result was a sustainable new delivery system for treated water leading to improved economic development and public health for the region.



## **Municipal Excellence** network

**The Municipal Excellence Network** is a collaboration between Alberta municipalities, municipal associations and Alberta Municipal Affairs. Its objectives are to recognize excellence in local government, to provide resources to help local governments establish and achieve their goals, and to facilitate information and knowledge sharing among municipalities.

**The Municipal Excellence Network** stands on three cornerstones: people, knowledge assets, and information technology systems. These all come together in the Network's Web site at [www.menet.ab.ca](http://www.menet.ab.ca), which now features a database of over 180 leading practices in governance, administration, human resources and financial management that have been submitted by Alberta municipalities. The Web site is a source for lessons learned, documents and contact information. The leading practices from the 2003 Minister's Awards for Municipal Excellence are part of this collection.

The Network is now in its third phase of development – a phase that focuses on municipal service delivery. The first phase focused on practices for municipal governance and administration and the second concentrated on municipal financial management and human resource management.

**For further information, please contact the Municipal Excellence Network team at (780) 427-2225 or email [menet@gov.ab.ca](mailto:menet@gov.ab.ca).**

Connect with the Municipal Excellence Network at:  
**[www.menet.ab.ca](http://www.menet.ab.ca)**